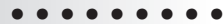




This article is written by Pastor Tom Eckstein of Concordia Lutheran Church in Jamestown. "His Word is Truth" will appear in this paper every 3rd Monday.

His Word Is Truth!



Today I begin my series on The Lord's Prayer as recorded in Matthew 6:9-13, which reads: **"This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."** In my future articles I plan to treat each individual

section of The Lord's Prayer. However, in today's article I will summarize what Scripture teaches about prayer in general.

A common statement we hear in our society is: *"Prayer changes things!"* Although there is some truth in that statement, it can also be understood in a wrong way. The devil would like us to view prayer as a kind of "good luck charm" or "magic ritual" that we use to control the events in our lives and manipulate God so that He will give us what we want. But Jesus Himself spoke against this kind of evil prayer in Matthew 6:7-8, which reads: **"...do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."**

But if God knows what we need before we ask Him, then why should we pray at all? The answer is: *"Prayer*

changes US!" You see, God doesn't need our prayer. However, God knows that WE need to pray! Prayer, when done properly, changes us and shapes us into the kind of people who learn to trust in God and submit to His loving plan for our lives. *Simply put, Scripture teaches that prayer is the conversation that takes place between God and His children whom He has saved from their sins by the work of His Son, Jesus the Christ!* God speaks to us, and we answer Him. God teaches us how to talk to Him! But why does God need to teach us how to talk to Him? The reason is that we are sinners who are prone to sinful ways of praying.

So, what is sinful prayer? **First**, sinful prayer is done merely to impress God or others (see Matthew 6:5). **Second**, sinful prayer attempts to manipulate God or control Him (see Matthew 6:7). **Third**, sinful prayer doubts God and treats Him as merely one of several "good luck charms" (see James 1:6-

8). **Finally**, prayer is sinful when offered by one who is in a state of unrepentant rebellion against God's will (see Malachi 2:13-16 and 1st Peter 3:7).

The Good News is that God sent His Son, Jesus, to save us from ALL our sins – including our many forms of sinful prayer. God convicts us of sin and then points us to Jesus who not only saves us from our sins by His death and resurrection for us, but also teaches us how to pray in a godly way.

So, what is godly prayer? **First**, godly prayer is done in Jesus' Name. In other words, godly prayer is done by those who trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior and believe that God hears our prayers for His sake because of all that He has done to save us from our sins (see John 14:6, Romans 1:8 and 1st Timothy 2:1-6). **Second**, godly prayer is done in submission to God's will (see Matthew 6:10 & 26:39, James 4:13-15 and 1st John 5:14-15). **Third**, godly prayer means that one trusts

that God will hear and answer as He sees best (see Matthew 7:7-11 and Romans 8:28). **Finally**, godly prayer is offered by one who is repentant of his or her sin (see Psalms 32 & 51; also 1st John 1:8-2:2).

With the above understood, what is the purpose of prayer? **First**, we use prayer to praise and thank God for all His undeserved physical and spiritual blessings (see Philippians 4:6-7 and 1st Thessalonians 5:16-18). **Second**, we use prayer to ask God to meet our specific needs. *But why do we do this if God already knows what we need?* The reason is that WE need to learn to ask God for what we need so that we will always understand that all we have always and only comes from His Hand. **Third**, we use prayer to confess our sins to God so that we might be lifted up by His Words of mercy and new life in Jesus.

Much more could be said about God's gift of prayer,

and we will examine what Scripture teaches about prayer in detail as we focus on The Lord's Prayer in future articles – **beginning in February!** Until then, remember that God hears and answers (as He sees best!) the prayers of those who repent of their sin and rejoice in the salvation won for us by His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.



Please read the next His Word is Truth article on Monday, February 18th! Pastor Eckstein will continue his series on The Lord's Prayer with the Introduction: "Our Father in Heaven."

For more resources about Christian teaching and issues, go to Concordia Lutheran's webpage: www.concordiajt.org

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